

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9129

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 1942

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, DM

SUBJ: SENIOR BENINESE OFFICIALS' VIEWS MAJOR INTERNATIONAL
ISSUES

SUMMARY: DURING COURTESY CALL DEC 3 BY AF/W DIRECTOR SMITH ON
GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GPRB), PAQUI EXPRESSED
VIEWS ON U.S.-BENIN RELATIONS, UN, NORTH KOREA'S ROLE IN
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, OPEC, GUINEA'S SECURITY, THE SPANISH
SAHARA, AND BENIN'S RELATIONS WITH TOGO AND NIGERIA. PAQUI ALSO
OFFERED PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.
END SUMMARY.

1. CHARGE ACCOMPANIED AF/W DIRECTOR SMITH DEC 3 ON COURTESY CALL
BENIN FORMIN DIRECTOR OF PROTOCOL PAQUI. DURING MEETING PAQUI
EXPRESSED VIEWS ON FOLLOWING PRINCIPAL ISSUES.

2. U.S.- BENIN RELATIONS: IN RESPONSE TO SMITH STATEMENT THAT U.S.-
BENIN RELATIONS HAD SHOWN IMPROVEMENT, PAQUI AGREED THAT
"SHADOWS WHICH PREVIOUSLY HAD HUNG OVER OUR RELATIONS" HAD
NOW DISSIPATED. PAQUI SAID THAT HE FORESAW NO MAJOR DIFFICUL-
TIES ON HORIZON.

3. UNITED NATIONS: PAQUI OBSERVED, HOWEVER, THAT THE U.S.
GOVERNMENT AS A GREAT POWER HAD ONLY LIMITED INTEREST IN THE
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UNITED NATIONS WITH THE MAJORITY OF SMALL COUNTRIES. SMITH

CHALLENGED STATEMENT, POINTING OUT THAT UN WAS MAJOR FOCUS OF U.S. PUBLIC OPINION AND THUS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO USG. FOR THIS REASON USG OBLIGED TO EXAMINE VOTES CAST AT UN ON ISSUES OF MAJOR CONCERN TO U.S., SUCH AS PUERTO RICO, GUAM AND N. KOREA. SMITH STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF THESE QUESTIONS TO U.S. AND NOTED THAT A COUNTRY'S VOTING RECORD IN UN COULD AFFECT ITS BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH U.S.

4. NORTH KOREA: PAQUI USED SMITH'S DISCUSSION OF U.S. INTEREST IN A JUST SETTLEMENT IN KOREA AS DEPARTURE POINT FOR SPECULATIVE DISCOURSE ON N. KOREA'S ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. HE SAID THAT N. KOREA HAD SKILLFULLY ESTABLISHED ITS CREDIBILITY AMONG THE POORER OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND WOULD CONTINUE TO OFFER ATTRACTIVE EXAMPLE FOR OTHER COUNTRIES. PAQUI FELT THAT NORTH KOREAN-SOUTH KOREAN PROBLEM EVENTUALLY WOULD BE SETTLED ALONG LINES OF TWO GERMANIES, BUT THAT MUCH TIME AND PATIENCE REQUIRED FOR SUCH AN OUTCOME.

5. OPEC: PAQUI RESPONDED TO SMITH'S REQUEST THAT BENIN USE ITS INFLUENCE WITH NIGERIA TO PREVENT AN OIL PRICE INCREASE AT THE NEXT OPEC MEETING, BY NOTING THAT SMALL COUNTRIES WHICH HAD BEEN EXPLOITED IN PAST TOOK PRIDE IN SOLIDARITY ON PRICING OF RAW MATERIALS. HE AGREED THAT IT WAS DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WHICH SUFFERED MOST, BUT SAID BENIN WAS WILLING TO MAKE SACRIFICES IN THE INTEREST OF SOLIDARITY. AT SAME TIME PAQUI SAID BENIN LOOKED TO OIL PRODUCERS SUCH AS NIGERIA FOR SPECIAL PRICING ARRANGEMENTS TO OFFSET SACRIFICE, ESPECIALLY SINCE GASOLINE WAS ALREADY THREE TIMES MORE EXPENSIVE IN COTONOU THAN IN LAGOS. PAQUI SAID THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT NIGERIA TO BE IN FOREFRONT OF THOSE SEEKING PRICE INCREASE.

6. GUINEA'S SECURITY: PAQUI AT FIRST WAS RELUCTANT TO TAKE A POSITION ON WHETHER GUINEA HAD SOUND REASONS FOR FEARING ATTACK FROM ITS NEIGHBORS. UPON FURTHER REFLECTION HE SAID "IT SEEMS", AND HE EMPHASIZED "SEEMS", "THAT GUINEA'S NEIGHBORS HAVE NO INTENTION OF ATTACKING HER."

7. WESTERN SAHARA: PAQUI PROFESSED HIMSELF PUZZLED OVER MOROCCO'S ACTION IN THE SAHARAOUI QUESTION, SINCE MOROCCO, AN EX-COLONY, WAS NOW BEHAVING LIKE A NEO-COLONIAL STATE. HE
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ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT MOROCCO'S MOVE WAS FOOLISH, SINCE A MAJORITY OF THE SAHARAOUIS PROBABLY WOULD HAVE VOTED TO MERGE WITH MOROCCO. NOW A DIFFICULT SITUATION HAD ARISEN, IN WHICH BENIN HAD TO SIDE WITH THE SAHARAOUIS. HE FELT, HOWEVER, SOLUTION COULD BE ACHIEVED THROUGH OAU AUSPICES AND A REFERENDUM.

8. NIGERIA AND TOGO: COMMENTING ON BENIN'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, PAQUI SAID THAT PREVIOUS DIFFICULTIES WITH TOGO AND

NIGERIA HAD BEEN ELIMINATED. WITH REGARD TO NIGERIA, PAQUI SAID BENIN LOOKED FORWARD TO CLOSER COOPERATION WITH THAT "ECONOMIC GIANT". HE BELIEVED RELATIONSHIP SIGNIFICANT SINCE IT DEMONSTRATED POSSIBILITY OF PRACTICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN IDEOLOGICALLY DIFFERENT REGIMES. PAQUI STATED OLD FEAR OF "REVOLUTION" AND SENSE OF THREAT BETWEEN OPPOSING REGIMES WAS DISAPPEARING IN AFRICA. HE FELT THAT THIS MOVEMENT TOWARD SOLIDARITY AMONG IDEOLOGICALLY-OPPOSED AFRICAN COUNTRIES WOULD EVENTUALLY SPELL END OF MINORITY REGIMES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

9. SOUTHERN AFRICA: PAQUI THEN OFFERED HIS OWN COMMENTARY ON U.S. ROLE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. HE SAID THAT AS AFRICAN HE FELT U.S. HAD WAITED TOO LONG, FOCUSSED ITS ATTENTION EXCLUSIVELY ON MIDDLE EAST TO DETRIMENT OF AFRICA. HAD THE U.S. ACTED IN 1970 OR '71, ITS DECISION WOULD HAVE BEEN "ACCLAIMED" AS IT WOULD HAVE STOOD GREATER CHANCE OF SUCCESS. HE SAID THAT WHILE HE SHARED HOPE THAT VIOLENCE COULD BE AVOIDED, HE FELT THAT SITUATION WAS HEADING TOWARD A CONFLAGRATION (FLAMBEE).
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